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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9263
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 2698
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0525
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0395
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1013
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1306
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1755
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0531
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000896

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EUR/RUS, EAP

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN DOES NOT SEEK SCO MEMBERSHIP

Classified By: CHARGE RICHARD E. HOAGLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) During an August 28 meeting with Foreign Minister Rashit Meredov (other issues septels), Charge asked if Turkmenistan seeks to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), noting President Berdimuhamedov had attended the August 16 SCO Summit in Bishkek -- a first for Turkmenistan.

12. (C) Meredov replied, "You obviously didn't read the president's Bishkek speech carefully." He summarized that Berdimuhamedov had simply thanked the SCO for inviting him and stated his willingness to work with any forum that respects the goals of peace, stability, security, and economic growth, of which the United Nations is the prime example. Meredov said, "If we had the intention to join, we would have chosen different words."

13. (SBU) Meredov elaborated that Turkmenistan, at least for the near term, will focus on promoting the United Nations' Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy, which is expected to open in Ashgabat before the end of the year.

14. (C) COMMENT: Meredov is sometimes a lawyerly schoolmarm who shows exasperation with dull students. He pointed out dryly that "work with" does not denote "become a member of." Turkmenistan holds tightly to its self-proclaimed and UN-sanctioned policy of "positive neutrality." The government likely perceives correctly that SCO is still a special-interest club dominated by China and Russia. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND